

Talking to Stakeholders with Alexandra Mack

April 2025 Book Event Recap

In this one-hour Zoom session, Alexandra drew from her rich multidisciplinary background in research, design, and project management to show how we can engage stakeholders more meaningfully and strategically.

Key Lessons from Dr. Mack

- **See stakeholders as people.** They are not abstract entities, but individuals who can help or hinder your work. Approach every stakeholder with an empathetic, learning mindset. Listen actively to understand their goals, constraints, and communication styles.
- **Let curiosity lead.** Ask questions, invite feedback, and ditch the urge to sound like the final authority. Curious language opens doors.
- **Communicate with clarity.** Use Mack's Two-Minute Summary to distill your message into its essence, or "elevator pitch." Lead with the "why," frame your work around clear actions and decisions, and avoid information overload.
- **Skip the ego.** You are in your role because you belong there. Demonstrate your value by listening well, reading the room, and connecting the dots.
- **Offer options even when the news is hard.** Be honest about difficult feedback but also present alternatives. Trust is built through transparency and forward motion.
- **Map relationships, not just titles.** Use Mack's simple stakeholder mapping (interest vs. influence) to understand who matters most. Create a cheat sheet on what your stakeholders care about and how they prefer to engage.
- **Balance user advocacy with business needs.** Know your non-negotiables. Show you understand competing priorities and can propose thoughtful tradeoffs.
- **Be strategic from the start.** Show how collaboration benefits stakeholders not just in output, but throughout the entire process.
- **Tune into subtle cues.** Repetition, vagueness, and hesitation may signal deeper stakeholder concerns. Include team perspectives to surface blind spots and body language.

To learn more about Alexandra and her new book: <https://www.alchymyx.com/book>